

SUMMER 2000 VOLUME 4 NUMBER 1

UNIVERSITY OF THE VIRGIN ISLANDS

UVI

magazine

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FACING THE FUTURE:



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UVI MAGAZINE
UNIVERSITY OF THE VIRGIN
ISLANDS MAGAZINE SUMMER
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EDITOR'S CORNER
by: Davida R. Siwisa

Institutions of higher learning are home for me. I was born at Temple University Hospital in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.



When I was a child and my mother would mention the place of my birth, I had visions of her walking about the campus with a novel or newspaper in hand, conversing with students and professors, then suddenly having to drop by the hospital to deliver me to the world. With that vision firmly placed in my head, I grew up fond of universities.

Later, as a teen, my father and I lived on Convent Avenue in Harlem for a long while. Convent Avenue is one of those beautifully preserved streets in Harlem that seems to go unmolested. It is also the location of City College. From late spring into the early fall, from the time I was about eleven, I would walk the eight blocks or so to the college and stroll the campus grounds. I would take a book or go empty handed, filled with anticipation to be among the students and beautiful buildings.

In later years, I hung out in Greenwich Village with New York University as the backdrop. The students entering and leaving the buildings, lounging about the square, became part of my persona. I was, in a small way, part of the backdrop of the university.

Magic happens on a university campus and its surrounding community that cannot be replicated anywhere else. One can almost feel thoughts flying through the air. Geniuses walk quietly among the crowd, pondering scientific formulas, solutions to research problems and new phrasing for poems and novels. Eager minds rush to and from classes. Professors and instructors walk briskly, often with students in tow, trying to impart words of wisdom in between classes. Inside the stone, brick, cement and ivy-covered or palm-drenched buildings sits the intellectual capital of our world. Politicians make their promises to young voters. The great authors, scientists and philosophers of the day hold audiences rapt. While new thoughts abound, old thoughts are extolled or torn down.

In 1976, when I first moved to the Virgin Islands, I was fortunate to be employed at the then "College of the Virgin Islands." The college was just 14 years old. The newness was still in the air, the period of growth and challenge apparent. The first president, Dr. Wanlass, was still at the helm. I felt at home and proud to finally be part of a college after haunting them all my life. I took my first college courses at CVI, proud

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that I was a college student, one of the learned rushing to classes.

When I left the Virgin Islands in 1978, I moved to Los Angeles. The transition from the College of the Virgin Islands to the University of California, Los Angeles was mapped out clearly in my mind. I was employed there for over 13 years. Once again, it was a coming home. By then, universities had been in the backdrop of my psyche and reality for so long that it was just the right fit for me. Westwood, the college town where UCLA sits, was the very archetype of the college town. While employed at UCLA, I also worked long and steadily toward my degree, eventually earning a B.A. in English.

Coming back to St. Thomas in 1994 and back to the college that was now the University of the Virgin Islands (UVI) was a homecoming. I needed to be home, in a community of faculty, staff, students, alumni and contributors who also love and make up the University family.

It is a pleasure to work at the University of the Virgin Islands again. I am honored to have known all three of its presidents. Many of the staff have worked at the University since its inception. Their commitment and dedication created the foundation upon which UVI stands strong.

With so many changes in the works, it's comforting to see some things are still the same as in 1976. Yet it is also exhilarating to see the growth and advances in information technology, construction and the future plans for the campuses. Looking at the changes, the University's history and the forward movement, lends an air of excitement as I think where we will be in five or ten years.

So welcome to this brief glimpse of our home. I hope you'll become a part of it.

David R. Siwisa
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